

LIFE AND PARDON NO. 2101

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1889,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”
Colossians 2:13.*

THE teaching of this verse is much the same as that in preceding verses—but the apostle does not hesitate to dwell again and again upon the important matters of quickening and forgiveness. These lie in the foundation. Ministers of Christ cannot too often go over the essential points—their hearers cannot too often hear vital truths of God. Our frail memories and dull understandings require line upon line, precept upon precept, in reference to fundamental truths—our apprehension of them is far too feeble, and can never be too vivid.

To find instances of the work of God in quickening souls and in pardoning sins, Paul does not look far afield. In the text he says, “And you,” and, according to the Revised Version, he repeats the word further on, and the passage runs thus, “You, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did He quicken together with Him.” He points personally to the saints at Colossae. We are not about to consider a prophecy to be fulfilled in the millennium, neither are we speaking of matters which concern the unknown dwellers in the moon. No. The theme belongs to you. To you, I say, if indeed you are the people of God. You are specimens of the divine work—you has He quickened, you has He pardoned. It is profitable for us to be engaged upon matters which concern us. I shall speak to you of those things which I have tasted and handled of the good word of life, and it is my firm belief that, to the most of you, these matters are familiar in your mouths as household words. If not, I grieve over you. Let none of us be content unless the works of the Holy Spirit are manifest in us. What good is it to me if another man receives life and pardon, if I am cast to death and lie under condemnation? Press forward, my beloved, to a personal enjoyment of these chief blessings of the covenant of grace—life in Jesus, forgiveness through His blood. Let every part of the sermon have a finger pointed at you. hear it speak to you, even to you. In the text we have the conjunction of two things—quickenings and forgiveness. We will consider these things in connection with each other. Their order it may be difficult to lay down; in the text they are described as if they were the same thing. Which comes first, the impartation of the new life, or the blotting out of sin? Is not pardon first? Does God pardon a dead man? How can He give life, which is the proof of pardon, to the man who is not forgiven? On the other hand, if a man has not spiritual life sufficient to make him feel his guilt, how can he cry for pardon? And if it is unsought, how shall it be received? A man may be spiritually alive so as to be groaning under the pollution and the burden of sin, and yet he may not have received, by faith, the remission of sins. In the order of our experience, the reception of life comes *before* the enjoyment of pardon. We are made to live spiritually, and so we are made to repent, to confess, to believe, and to receive forgiveness; first, the life which sighs under sin; and then the life which sings concerning pardon. Misery is first felt—and then mercy is received.

Following the line of experience, we shall notice, concerning the favored ones of God, first, what they were: “You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh.” Secondly, we shall note what has been done in them: “Has He quickened together with Him.” And then, thirdly, what He has done for them: “Having forgiven you all trespasses.” May the Holy Spirit lead us into these truths of God and give us the life of God, and the rest of faith!

I. First, then, consider WHAT THEY WERE. Beloved, they were all by nature children of wrath, even as others; there is no distinction in the condition of natural men before the law. We all fell in Ad-

am; we are all gone out of the way and have all become unprofitable. Any difference which now exists has been made by divine grace; but by nature we are *all* in the same condemnation and all tainted by the same depravity.

Where were we when the Lord first looked on us? Answer: We were dead according to the sentence of the law. The Lord had said, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." And Adam did die the moment that he ate of the forbidden fruit—and his posterity died in him. What is natural death? It is the separation of the body from the soul, which is its life. What is spiritual death? It is the separation of the soul from God, *who* is its life. It had been the very life of Adam to be united to God. And when he lost his union of heart with God, his spirit underwent a dreadful death. This death is upon each one of us by nature. Above this comes in the dreadful fact, that, "He that believes not is condemned already." The position of every unbeliever is that of one who is dead by law. As far as the liberties and privileges and enjoyments of heavenly things are concerned, he is written among the dead. His name is registered among the condemned. Yet, beloved, while we are under the sentence of death, the Lord comes to us in almighty grace and quickens us into newness of life, forgiving us all trespasses! Are you trembling because of your condemned condition under the law? Do you recognize the tremendous truth of God that death is the sure and righteous result of sin? Then to you, even to you, the life-giving, pardoning word is sent in the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Oh that you may believe and so escape from condemnation!

These favored people were dead through the action of their sin. Sin stupefies and kills. Where it reigns, the man is utterly insensible to spiritual truth, feeling, and action; he is dead to everything that is holy in the sight of God. He may have keen *moral* perceptions, but he has no *spiritual* feelings. Men differ widely as to their moral qualities. All men are not alike bad, especially when measured in reference to their fellow men. Some may even be excellent and praiseworthy, viewed from that standpoint. But to *spiritual* things all men are alike dead. Look at the multitude of our hearers—to what purpose do we preach to them? You may declare the wrath of God against the godless but what do they care? You may speak of Jesus' love to the lost—how little it affects them! Sin is not horrible, and salvation is not precious to them. They may not controvert your teaching. But they have no sensible apprehension of the truth of God—it does not come home to them as a matter of any consequence. Let eternal things drift as they may; they are perfectly content so long as they can answer those three questions—"What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?" No higher question troubles their earth-bound minds. They may entertain some liking towards theological study and Bible teaching, as a matter of education. But they do not view the truths of God revealed in Scripture as matters of overwhelming importance. They trifle. They delay. They set on one side the things which make for their peace. Their religion has no influence upon their thoughts and actions—they are dead. Sin has slain them. I see them mingled with this great congregation like corpses sitting upright among the living. I look out upon the masses of this vast city and upon the innumerable hosts of populous countries and I see a measureless cemetery, a dread domain of death; a region without life.

One point must be noticed here, which makes this spiritual death the more terrible—they are dead but yet *responsible*. If men were literally dead, then they were incapable of sin. But the kind of death of which we speak involves a responsibility none the less, but all the greater. If I say of a man that he is such a liar that he cannot speak the truth, do you therefore think him blameless? No. But you judge him to be all the more worthy of condemnation because he has lost the very sense which discerns between a truth and a lie. If we say of a certain man, as we have had to do, "He is a rogue ingrained. He is so tricky that he cannot deal honestly but must always be cheating"—do you, therefore, excuse his fraud and pity him? Far from it; his inability is not physical, but *moral* inability; and is the consequence of his own persistence in evil. The law is as much binding upon the morally incapable as upon the most sanctified in nature. If, through a man's own perversity, he wills to reject good and love evil, the blame is with himself. He is said to be dead in sin; not in the sense that he is irresponsible; but in the sense that he is so evil that he will not keep the law of God. If a man were brought tomorrow before the Lord Mayor and he were accused of theft, suppose he should say, "My Lord, I ought to be set free, for I am such a rascal that I cannot see an article in a shop but what my fingers itch to lay hold upon it!" Would not the judge

give such a worthless person all the more punishment? O sinners, dead in sin, you are not as dead as thereby to be free from the guilt of breaking God's commandments and rejecting Christ. Rather you heap upon yourselves mountains of guilt every day that you abide in this condition.

The ungodly are so dead as to be careless as to their state. Indeed, all gracious things are despised of them. Sometimes they attend religious services; but they get angry if the preacher presses them too hard. I have known them vow that they will never hear the man again because he is so personal. Pray, sirs, what is a preacher to be, but personal? If he shoots, is he to have no target and take no aim? What is our very office and business but to deal personally with you about your sins? In ungodly men there is an utter recklessness as to their condition before God. They know that they may die. They know that if they die they will be lost. But they try to forget these facts. The ostrich is said to bury its head in the sand so as not to see the hunter, and then to fancy that it is safe. Thus do men fancy that, by forgetting the danger, they escape it. Some of you have lived in carelessness until gray hairs are on your head; will you still risk your souls? Alas, you look more anxiously after a battered sixpence, which you miss from your pocket, than after your immortal soul! If you miss a ring from your finger while sitting here, you are more concerned about *it* than about your eternal destiny. How foolish! How dead are you to all just judgment and prudence! It is your *soul*, your own soul, your only soul, your never-dying soul, to which we beg you to pay attention; and yet you can hardly have patience with us. If a prisoner in the condemned cell had no sort of care whether he should be set free or hanged, but could even joke about the scaffold and the executioner, you would feel that only by an extreme act of mercy could such a person be pardoned. No, if he cares nothing for the penalty, let him bear it—so man would say; and there would be justice in it. Yet God spoke not so in reference to some of us, for while we were in a condition of callousness, the grace of God came to us and by quickening us gave us to be anxious and led us to pray.

The text adds that we were dead in the uncircumcision of our flesh. I need not dwell upon the external figure here employed. Its meaning is clear enough. The uncircumcision of our flesh means that we were not in covenant with God—it shows, also, the abiding of our filthiness upon us—the willingness of our souls to be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without God in the world. This is where we were in the uncircumcision of our flesh. And yet the grace of God found us out. Oh, I could paint the man! He is anxious about this world, but what does he care for the world to come? He is a master of his own trade and he prospers in it. But for his God and His service, he spares not an hour's consideration. He cries, "The covenant of grace, what is that?" And he turns on his heel, like Pilate, when he had said, "What is truth?" As to having any sense of the constant presence of God, and his deep indebtedness to God, and of the sweetness of being pardoned, and the bliss of enjoying the love of God, and walking with God—he has no notion, or, at best, he cries, "Oh, yes, that is all very fine for those who have nothing else to do. Let them find delight in it if they can!" To him God is nothing. heaven is nothing. hell less than nothing. He passes by Calvary, itself, where God in human flesh is bleeding out redemption, and it is nothing to him. The wail from the cross he never hears, though it asks him this question: "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow!" What cares he for the wounds of his soul's best lover? He has no concern about any purchase made by the Redeemer, or of any death especially on his behalf, or any resurrection with Christ which he may hope to enjoy. The man is dead to faith and glory and immortality! The low and the groveling charm him, but the pure and the noble find him dead to their claims. Yet to such, even to such, does sovereign grace approach. Unbought, unsought—it comes according to that word of Scripture, "I am found of them that sought Me not."

Again, spiritually, the ungodly are dead and utterly incapable of obtaining life for themselves; could any of you, with the utmost diligence, create life, even the lowest form of it? To a man who is dead, could you impart life? You might galvanize his limbs into a kind of motion; but real *life*, the pulsing of the heart, the heaving of the lungs—could you create it? You know you cannot! Much less can the dead man himself create life within himself. The man without Christ is utterly unable to quicken himself. We are "without strength," unable to do anything as of ourselves and while we are in this condition, divine grace comes to us.

Alas, there remains one more point! Man may be described as dead and becoming corrupt. After a while the dead body shows symptoms of decay—this is vice in its beginning. Leave the corpse where it is, and it will become putrid, polluting the air and disgusting every sense of the living. “Bury my dead out of my sight,” is the cry of the most affectionate mother or wife. And so it is with many ungodly men. Some of them are restrained from the grosser vices, just as Egyptian bodies were, by spices, preserved from rottenness. By example, by instruction, by fear, by surroundings—many are kept from the more putrid sins, and therefore are not so obnoxious to *society*. Towards God they are dead as ever. But towards man they are no more objectionable than the mummies in yonder cases in the British Museum. But this embalming of the dead with spices of morality has not been carried out with hosts of those around us. They rot above ground—their blasphemies pollute the air, their lewdness infects our streets, their revelry makes nights hideous. The tendency of dead flesh is towards the corruption which shows itself in loathsome actions. The mercy is, that where even *this* has taken place, where the foul worm of vice has begun its awful work in drunkenness, in blasphemy, in dishonesty, or in uncleanness of life—even *there* the quickening Spirit can come! As life came to Lazarus, who had been dead four days, so can spiritual life come to those who have fallen into the noisomeness of open transgression. Leaving this painful matter, let us be filled with deep humility; for such were we in days not long since; but let us also be filled with hope for others; for He who quickened us can do the same for them.

II. And now, secondly, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN US? What has God worked?

We have been quickened. To tell you, exactly, how quickening is worked in us, is quite beyond my power. The Holy Spirit comes to a man when he is dead in sin and He breathes into him a new and mysterious life. We do not know how we receive our natural life—how the soul comes into the body we know not. Do you suppose that spiritual life in its beginning will be less mysterious? Did not our Lord say, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound thereof but can not tell from where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit”? You know not the way of the Spirit, nor how He breathes eternal life. We know, however, that as soon as life comes, our first feeling is one of pain and uneasiness. In the case of persons who have been nearly drowned, when they begin to revive they experience very unpleasant sensations. Certainly the parallel holds good in spiritual things. *Now*, the man sees sin to be an exceedingly great evil. He is startled by the discovery of its foulness; he was told all about it, and yet he knew nothing to purpose. But now sin becomes a load, a pain, a horror. As dead, he felt no weight; but as quickened, he groans beneath a load. Now he begins to cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Now the angels see him on his knees in private. Behold, he prays! “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” is his hourly sigh. Now, also, he begins to struggle against his evil habits—he addicts himself to Bible reading, to praying, and to hearing the Word of God. He is for awhile desperately earnest. Alas, he goes back to his old sins! Yet he cannot rest—again he seeks the Lord. With some men a large part of their early spiritual life has been taken up with agonizing strivings and painful endeavors to free themselves from the chains of sin. They have had to learn their weaknesses by their failures. But the grace of God has not failed. Some, even for years after their conviction by the Spirit of God, have had no comfortable sense of pardon but very much conflict with sin; still, the life of God has never been utterly quenched within them.

Their struggles have proved that the heavenly germ was alive and was painfully resisting the forces of evil. Men themselves act as if they tried to put out the light which divine grace has kindled. But they cannot effect their purpose. When once they have been disturbed in their nest, the Lord has not allowed them to settle down in it again. Their once sweet sin has become bitter as wormwood to them. We have known men under conviction go further into sin to drown their convictions—just as a whale, when harpooned, will dive into the depths. But they come up again and again are wounded—they cannot escape. In the biography of a man of God, who in his early days was a terrible drunkard, we find that, in struggling against intoxication, he was frequently beaten. And there appears in his diary a long blank of which he says, “Four years and a half elapsed, and no account rendered! What can have been the cause of this chasm? Sin! Yes, sin of the blackest dye, of the deepest ingratitude to the Father of mercies!” The wanderer was restless and unhappy in sin. The life within was, like Jonah, thrown into the depths of the

sea; but it hated its condition and struggled to rise out of it. God will not leave the life He has given, even under the worst conditions.

But quickening leads to far more than this. By-and-by the new life exercises its holy senses and is more clearly seen to be life. The man begins to see that his only hope is in Christ and he tries humbly to hide himself beneath the merit of the Lord Jesus. He does not dare to say, "I am saved," but he deeply feels that if ever he is saved, it must be through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Now, also, he begins to pray, pleading the precious blood. Now he hopes and his hope looks only through the windows of his Lord's wounds. He looks for mercy only through the atoning sacrifice. By-and-by he comes to trust that this mercy has really come to him and that Jesus had him on His heart when He suffered on the tree. By a desperate effort he throws himself on Christ, and determines to lie at His feet, and if he must perish, to perish looking unto Jesus! This is a glorious resolve. See him after a while, as he rises up into peace and joy and consecration! His life now being joined to that of his Lord, he rejoices that he is never to be separated from Him. I think I hear him say, "I see it all now. The Lord Jesus bore my sin and carried it away; I died because He died; I live because He lives. The Lord accepts me, because He accepts His Son, and thus I am 'accepted in the Beloved.'"

From now on the quickened man tries to live for Christ, out of gratitude. This is the nature of the life he has received; he strives to grow up into Christ, and to become like his Lord in all things. From now on he and his Lord are linked together in an everlasting union, and the cause of Jesus is the one thing for which he lives, and for which he would be content to die. Blessed be God, I am not talking any new things to you—you know what I mean! For these forty years have I felt these things, and many of you have felt them still longer! At first the struggling light within you revealed to you nothing but your darkness—but now you see Jesus and see yourselves alive in Him with a life eternal and heavenly. Blessed be the Lord who has raised Jesus from the dead, and has quickened us in Him and with Him!

III. Now we come to the third point, upon which I pray for a renewed unction from the Holy One. Let us consider, in the last place, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE FOR US—"Having forgiven you all trespasses." Believing in Christ Jesus, I am absolved. I am clear, I am clear before the Lord. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the most joyful theme that I can bring before you. And I want you to notice, first, that pardon is a divine act: "Having forgiven all trespasses." Who does that? Why, He that quickened you! You are now exclusively the Lord's own—and the same God who gives us spiritual life also grants us pardon from His throne. He sovereignly dispenses pardons. We need not go to any human priest to seek absolution, for we may go at once to God, who alone has sovereign right to execute the death sentence or to pardon the offender. He alone can grant it with sure effect. If any man should say, "absolve te," (I absolve you), I would take it for what it was worth, and its worth would not be much. But if HE says it, who is the Law-Giver and the supreme King; if HE says it, against whom I have offended, then am I happy, indeed. Glory be to His name, who is a God ready to pardon! What bliss I have received in receiving forgiveness from God! Oh, my hearer, if you have done wrong to your fellow man, ask his forgiveness, as you are bound to do. And if you get it, be thankful and feel as if a weight were removed from your conscience. But, after all, what is this, compared with being forgiven *all* trespasses by God, Himself? This can calm the ruffled sea of the soul—yes, still its fiercest tempest. This can make you sleep at nights, instead of tossing to and fro upon a pillow, which conscience turns to stone beneath your aching head. This gives the gleaming eye, the beaming face, the bounding heart. This brings heaven down to earth and lifts us near to heaven. The Lord has blotted out our sins, and thus He has removed the bitterest fountain of our sorrows. Pardon from God is a charter of liberty, a testament of felicity.

God's pardon is a gift most free. Look at the text and note that this pardon comes to persons who are dead in sin. They were utterly unworthy, and did not even seek mercy. The Lord who comes to men when they are dead in sin, comes to quicken them and to pardon them. Not because they are ready but because HE is ready. Listen, O man! If in your bosom there is at this moment a great stone instead of a heart of flesh—if you are paralyzed as to all good things; if there is only enough life in you to make you feel your terrible incapacity for holiness and fellowship with God, yet God can pardon you—even as you are and where you are! We were in that condition, my brethren, when the Lord came to us in love.

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We saw that Jesus died, we believed in Him as able to save, by His grace, and we received the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is free. The Lord looks for no good thing in the sinner. But He *gives* him every good thing. O my hearer, if the Lord looked for good in you, He could not find it. He looks for nothing you can *do*, or nothing you can *feel*, or nothing you can *resolve to do or feel*. But He shows mercy because He delights in mercy. He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin, because it is His nature to be gracious. The cause of divine pardon is in God, Himself, and in His dear Son. It is not in you, O sinner! Being dead in the uncircumcision of your flesh, what can you do? He quickens you and He pardons you. Yes, He is all in all to you. Wonders of divine grace! When I get upon this subject I do not need to give you illustrations, or to use choice phrases; the glorious fact stands forth in its own native beauty; infinite pardon from an infinite God; given because of His own mercifulness and the merit of His beloved Son; and not because of anything whatever in the man whom He pardons. “But the man repents,” says one. Yes, I know. But God *gives* him repentance. “But he confesses sin.” Yes, I know it, for the Lord *leads* him to acknowledge his trespasses. All and everything which looks like a condition of pardon, is also *given* by the free and sovereign grace of God—and given freely—without money and without price.

I want you to notice how universal this pardon is in reference to all sin: “Having forgiven you all trespasses.” Consult your memory and think of all your trespasses, if you dare. That one black night! Has it left a crimson spot, indelible, never to be concealed? In many instances one special sin breeds more distress than a thousand others. That crime has left a deeper scar than any other. In vain you cry, “Out, hideous spot!” Should you wash that hand, it would stain ten thousand Atlantics, and it would remain a scarlet spot, never to be erased forever. No process known to men can wash out the stain! But God’s infinite mercy can put away that hideous, unmentionable crime, and it shall be as though it had never been. Possibly, however, you do not so much remember any one transgression as the whole heap of them. Certainly, a multiplicity of minor sins heaped together, tower upward like a great Alp, although no *one* offense may seem so notable as to demand mention. We have sinned every day and every hour and almost every moment of every hour—how numberless our transgressions! Our sins of omission are beyond all computation. But all these, too many for you to remember, too many for me to number, are forgiven to the man in Christ: “Having forgiven you *all* trespasses”; ALL, not one excepted. You have sins not yet known nor confessed—but they are forgiven, for the blood cleans from all sin.

I should like to help your memory by reminding you of your sins before conversion. Blessed is he whose sin is covered. One does not wish to uncover it. “Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions.” The child of God, who has long been rejoicing in faith, still has need to pray that; for our sins may vex our bones long after they have been removed from our consciences; the consequences of a sin may fret us after the sin, itself, is forgiven.

Then think of your sins *after* conviction. You were struck down on a certain day with a great sense of sin and you hurried home and cried upon your knees, “O God, forgive me!” Then you vowed you would never do the like again. But you did. The dog returned to his vomit. You began to attend a place of worship. You were very diligent in religious duties. But all of a sudden you went back to your old companions and your old ways. If your sin was drink, you thought you had mastered it and could be very moderate. But a fierce thirst came upon you, which you could not resist—and you were soon as drunk as ever. Remember this with shame. Or it may have been a more deliberate backsliding. And deliberation greatly adds to the sin of sins. Without being particularly tempted, you began to hanker after your old pleasures and almost to despise yourself for having denied yourself their indulgence. I know a man who was present at a prayer meeting and was so worked upon that he prayed. But afterwards he said that he would never go into such a place again, for fear he should again be overcome. Think of being afraid to be led aright—ashamed to go to heaven! Ah, friends, we have been bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, dogs that have slipped their collars, horses that have kicked over the traces. Sins after conviction, as doing despite to divine love, are very grievous trespasses. Like the moth, you had your wings singed in the candle and yet you flew back to the flame—if you had perished in it, who could have pitied you? Yet, after such folly, the Lord had mercy on you—“Having forgiven you ALL trespasses.”

A still worse set of sins must be remembered; sins after conversion—sins after you have found peace with God, after you have enjoyed high fellowship with Jesus. O brothers and sisters, these are cruel wounds for our Lord! These are evils which should melt us to tears, even to hear of them. What? Pardoned, and then sin again! Beloved of the Lord, and still rebelling! You sang so sweetly—

“Your will be done; Your will be done”

and then went home and murmured! You talked to others about evil temper, and yet grew angry. You are old and experienced, and yet no boy could have been more imprudent! O God, we bless You for the morning and evening lamb; for Your people need the sacrifice perpetually! We need a morning sacrifice, lest the night has gathered anything of evil. And we require an evening sacrifice for the sins of the day.

Dwell for a while upon the large blessing of the text. Whatever your sins may have been, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has quickened you together with Him and has forgiven you all trespasses. He pardons most effectually. Ask God about your sins and He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more!” If God Himself does not remember them, they are most effectually removed. Ask Holy Scripture where they are, and Hezekiah tells you, “You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” Where is that? God sees everything, and everywhere, and therefore everywhere is before His face. If, therefore, He casts our sins behind His back, He throws our sins into “the nowhere”—they cease to exist. “In those days, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” Surely this is enough to set all the bells of your heart ringing!

Remember, also, dear friends, that this pardon is most perfect. He does not commute the punishment but He pardons the crime. He does not pardon, and then confine for life, nor pardon today and punish tomorrow—this were not worthy of a God. The pardon is given and never revoked—the deed of divine grace is done and it can never be undone. God will not remember the sin which He has blotted out, nor condemn the offender whom He has absolved. O believer, the Lord so fully absolves you, that all your sins, which might have shut you out of heaven, shall not hinder your way there! All that sin of yours, which might have filled you with despair, shall not even fill you with dismay. The Lord shall wipe the tears from your eyes, as He has washed the sins from your person. Even the very stain of sin shall be removed. Remember what He says of scarlet and crimson sins. Does He say, “I will wash them so that nothing shall remain beyond a pale red”? Does He say, “I will wash them till nothing shall remain but a slight rosy tint”? No! He says, “They shall be as wool: I will make them white as snow.” The Almighty Lord will do His work of remission in an absolutely perfect style, and not a shadow of a spot shall remain.

Here is a point that I must dwell upon for a moment, namely, that this pardon shall be seen to be perfectly consistent with justice. If I were pardoned and felt that God had weakened the foundations of His moral government by winking at evil, I should feel insecure in my pardoned state—and should have no rest. If the justice of God were in the least infringed by my forgiveness, I should feel like a felon towards the universe and a robber of God. But I bless God that He pardons sin in strict connection with justice. Behold the costly system by which this was effected; He Himself came here in the person of His dear Son; He Himself became man, and dwelt among us; He Himself took the load of His people’s sin; He bore the sin of many, and was made a curse for us; He put away both sin and the curse by His wondrous sacrifice. The marvel of heaven and earth, of time and eternity, is the atoning death of Jesus Christ. This is the mystery that brings more glory to God than all creation and all providence. How could it be that He should be slain for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God? To finish transgression and make an end of sin was a labor worthy of His Godhead—and Christ has perfectly achieved it by His sufferings and death. You had no fiction before you when, just now, you sang concerning Him—

*“Jesus was punished in my place,
Without the gate my Surety bled
To expiate my stain—
On earth the Godhead deigned to dwell,
And made of infinite avail
The sufferings of the man.”*

Now are we justly forgiven; and the throne of God is established. By His death as our Substitute, our Lord Jesus has set forth the righteous severity of God as well as His boundless mercy. To us justice and mercy seemed opposed, but in Jesus we see them blended. We bless the Lord for His atoning sacrifice. We feel an infinite satisfaction in the fact that none can dispute the validity of a pardon which comes to us signed by the hand of the eternal King—and countersigned by the pierced hand of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree; and gave for those sins a complete vindication of the law which we had broken.

Note well the last consideration upon this point of the forgiveness of all trespasses. It ought to make you feel unutterably happy. From now on your pardon is bound up with the glory of Christ. If your pardon does not save you, then Christ is no Savior. If, resting in Him, your sins are not forgiven, then He undertook a fruitless errand when He came to save His people from their sins. Every drop of Christ's blood demands the eternal salvation of every soul that is washed in it. The Godhead and manhood of Christ and all the glory of His mediatorship stand up and claim for every believer that he shall be delivered from sin. What? Did He bear sin and shall we bear it, too? No—if the Lord has found in Him a ransom, His redeemed are free. Since to save me, who was once dead in sin, and in the uncircumcision of my flesh—and now has become the glory of Christ, I am sure I shall be saved, for He will not tarnish His own name! O believer, to bring you home without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, has become the ambition of your Savior and He will not fail, or be discouraged. He will neither lose His lifework, nor His death throes. God forbid! And yet this must be, unless you, who are quickened together with Him, shall be found at the last without fault before the throne of God.

Now, let us just think of this: we are forgiven. I do not mean all of you. For if you are out of Christ, you have no part in this grand absolution. May the Lord have mercy upon you, quicken you today and bring you to Christ! But as many as are trusting in Christ and so are living in union with Him, you are forgiven. A person who has been condemned by the law and then has received a free pardon, walks out of the prison and goes where he pleases. There is a policeman. Does he fear him? No, he has a free pardon, and the policeman cannot touch him. But there are a great many persons who know him and know him to be guilty. That does not matter. He has a free pardon and nobody can touch him. He cannot be tried again, however guilty he may have been. The free pardon has wiped the past right out. Now, today, child of God, you begin anew—you are clean—for He has washed you and has done the work right well. We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore shall we be before the throne of God and praise Him. What could we do less than praise Him day and night? When shall we ever stop? When we are in His temple, free from all danger of future sin and trial, we will forever praise Him who has forgiven us all trespasses. I charge you, let us meet in heaven, all of us! Some have dropped in here this morning from all parts of the country and from America. And we may never meet again on earth. Let us meet around the throne in heaven and sing, "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." God grant that we may! Who wants to be left out? Is there one person here who would like to be shut out in that day? I pray you, enter in at once—

*"Come guilty souls and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds."*

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